

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an amendment application pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2014/C 5/05)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾.

AMENDMENT APPLICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs ⁽²⁾****AMENDMENT APPLICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 9****'BLEU DE GEX HAUT-JURA'/'BLEU DE SEPTMONCEL'****EC No: FR-PDO-0217-0941-24.01.2012****PGI () PDO (X)****1. Sections of the specification affected by the amendment**

- Name of product
- Description of product
- Geographical area
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- National requirements
- Other (update of the contact details of the group and the inspection bodies)

2. Type of amendment(s)

- Amendment to single document or summary sheet
- Amendment to specification of registered PDO or PGI for which neither the single document nor the summary sheet has been published

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12. Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

- Amendment to specification that requires no amendment to the published single document (Article 9(3) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)
- Temporary amendment to specification resulting from imposition of obligatory sanitary or phytosanitary measures by public authorities (Article (4)9 of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

3. Amendment(s)

3.1. Amendment to point 2 'Description of product'

Raw material:

The words 'cow's milk cheese' are amended to read 'cheese made solely with raw processed cow's milk', which is more precise.

Organoleptic properties:

All the descriptors of the cheese have been analysed in order to give a more realistic description of the product:

- the words describing the shape of the wheel, 'a slightly convex heel', are replaced by 'clearly rounded corners between the sides and the heel', which better describes the traditional form of this cheese,
- the text on the weight of the cheese is changed from '6,5 to 8,5 kilograms' to '6 to 9 kilograms'. The 6 kg cheeses as well as the 9 kg cheeses retain the characteristics of 'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura'/'Bleu de Septmoncel', including as regards the distribution of the blue mould. This diversity results partly from the fact that the composition of the milk varies throughout the year, the curd is very aerated and therefore its density is difficult to evaluate or measure and, above all, it is impossible to standardise manual moulding,
- the words 'moulded in a mould which is 36 cm in diameter' are replaced by 'and a diameter of 31 to 35 centimetres at the time of marketing', which describes the ripened cheese,
- the description of the rind is supplemented with the words 'to brownish [...]. The rind bears the imprint of the moulding cloth and possibly of the folds of the cloth.'
- the description of the paste is supplemented with the words 'with a slight opening',
- in the description of the marbling, the words 'well distributed throughout' are replaced by 'The blue areas, proteolysed areas (yellow) and any chalky areas (white and dry) are distributed evenly over the cheese slice. The pricking marks may be visible and may be associated with the development of blue or white moulds.', which is more precise.

Analytical characteristics:

Instead of '50 per cent fat in the dry matter (the latter not being less than 52 grams per 100 grams of the product)', read: 'has a minimum fat content of 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after complete desiccation and must have a dry matter content of at least 52 grams per 100 grams of cheese.'. This wording does not change the composition of the product.

The text on the minimum salt content is moved from the chapter 'Method of production' to the chapter 'Description of product', which is a more suitable place for this analytical criterion.

3.2. Amendment of point 4 'Evidence that the product originates in the geographical area'

In view of developments in national legislation and regulations, the Section 'Evidence that the product originates in the geographical area' has been consolidated to bring together, in particular, provisions on declaration obligations and on the keeping of registers for tracing the product and monitoring production conditions.

These amendments are linked to the reform of the system for monitoring designations of origin introduced by Order No 2006-1547 of 7 December 2006 on enhancing the value of agricultural, forestry, food and marine products. In particular, provisions have been included for authorising operators by recognising their ability to meet the requirements of the specification of the designation from which they wish to benefit. The specification of the designation of origin is checked in accordance with a monitoring plan drawn up by an inspection body.

Moreover, this section has been added to and supplemented by several provisions on registers and declarative documents enabling the cheeses' traceability to be guaranteed.

3.3. Amendment of point 5 'Method of production'

5. Milk production

5.1. Breeds

In order to facilitate checks, the words 'of breed type 46 or 35' have been added.

Likewise, 'products of crossing the two breeds of certified descent' are allowed. The two pure breeds and their crossing are historically of local origin. The crossing has no observable impact on the specificity of the product.

5.2. Grassland management and soil improvers

A limit on nitrogenous mineral manure has been added in order to preserve the grassland's floristic diversity: 'Mineral manure may be spread only after the mowing of the first cut, and the input is limited to 35 units of nitrogen per hectare.'

To the same end, rules have been laid down on the resowing of seeds in grassland: 'Having regard to the impact of the grassland's biodiversity on the richness of the product, resowing must be carried out using a mixture including at least one grass and one legume and consisting of at least four species.'

The same applies to organic improvers: 'As regards organic manure, only solid manure, slurry, liquid manure, composts of green waste from the holding, agricultural co-composts, or "manure with green waste" and stabilised sewage sludge from the geographical area of the designation of origin "Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura" or "Bleu de Septmoncel" are authorised. It is prohibited to use manure from silage-fed animals. Sewage sludge must not be spread between 15 June and 15 September. Any use of the forage area (grazing or mowing) is prohibited for at least four weeks after the date of spreading organic manure.'

5.3. Feed for dairy cows

In order to reinforce the link between the product and its region, grazing has been made compulsory: 'The dairy cows must graze after the snow has melted and as soon as the soils' bearing capacity allows, for as long as the weather conditions, bearing capacity and the presence of grass allow. The grazing and shedding dates must be recorded.'

In order to maintain the link between the product and its region, concentrates are limited: 'The supply of concentrates in the dairy cows' feed (including the supply of dried plants) is limited on average for the herd to 1 800 kg per dairy cow per year.' and 'The following are banned from the dairy cows' feed: fodder which adversely affects the milk's smell or taste, such as leek, cabbage, rape, radish, turnip, beet leaves, straw treated with ammoniac and the distribution of whey, unless the whey is produced on the holding.'

For the same reason rules have been laid down on green feeding: 'If there is a risk of soil degradation or insufficient intake through grazing, a green feeding supplement is allowed if it is limited to a single meal a day and grazing provides at least half the daily ration of roughage. In this case the green fodder, harvested properly, must be transported fresh to the farm. It must not be allowed to warm up before being given to the animals. In any case, the fodder must be consumed within four hours of mowing.'

5.4. Feed banned on the holding

In order to prevent the milk from deteriorating, rules have been laid down on the feeding of all ruminant herds on the holding: 'The following conditions shall apply throughout the year to all ruminant herds on dairy holdings producing milk for "Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura" or "Bleu de Septmoncel"':.

'Only plants and supplementary feed derived from non-transgenic products are authorised in animal feed. The maximum accidental and technically unavoidable contamination threshold must comply with existing regulations. In compound feed, the maximum threshold shall apply to each component.'

'The following are banned: the moistening of feed before distribution, hay preservatives other than sodium chloride, supplementary feed with a moisture content in excess of 15 % (this is nonetheless authorised for heifers), the distribution of molassed feed with a molasses content in excess of 5 % of the total weight, urea, vinasses and concentrates containing urea and vinasses, and all additives with the exception of vitamins and minerals (in particular, protected amino acids are banned).'

'Silage products and other fermented feed, including round bales covered in plastic film, are prohibited on the holding and in the feed of ruminant herds.'

'The fodder beet must be carefully cleaned before distribution. When beet is cut into pieces, it must be prepared each day.'

'If feed is mixed, all moistening is banned, particularly by the addition of water, beet or green fodder.'

5.5. Milking

As the milk's natural flora must be preserved, 'The milking and cleaning procedures must be carried out without disturbing the milk's natural flora. The cows must be milked twice a day, in the morning and in the evening at regular times. Omitting a milking is prohibited.'

5.6. Time limit for transferring the milk to the production vat

The milk must be collected daily and used quickly in accordance with the time limits of local tradition: 'Only mixtures from a maximum of two consecutive milkings over a maximum period of 24 hours may be collected per dairy holding. If the milk is chilled at between 10 °C and 18 °C, production must start before midday at the latest if the first milking took place in the morning of the previous day and before midnight at the latest if the first milking took place in the evening of the previous day. If the milk is chilled at between 2 °C and 8 °C, a maximum of 36 hours may elapse between the first milking and production.'

Explanation: the term 'daily' used previously is replaced by '24 hours' and more detailed information is included on the number of milkings from the same holding that may be collected. The wording remains the same for milk preserved at between 2 °C and 8 °C. As regards milk preserved at between 10 °C and 18 °C, the wording has been changed in order to facilitate monitoring.

The phrase 'The milk must be chilled immediately if renneting does not take place within two hours', a requirement which is difficult to check (no maximum temperature) and which is based on the general regulations, has been replaced by a set of strict rules on temperature and time limits for renneting.

'The number of milkings collected may be increased to three over a period of 36 hours per holding and the time limit for renneting may be increased by 12 hours in the event of exceptional road traffic problems caused by adverse weather conditions.'

Explanation: in mountain areas, which typically have a harsh climate, it was considered necessary to provide for specific adjustments in the event of road traffic problems caused by adverse weather conditions, which sometimes prevent lorries from collecting the milk.

5.7. Processing

The phrase 'This milk must be collected separately from any other milk which does not meet the terms of the specification.' has been deleted because it is redundant in view of the sentence preceding it: 'The only types of milk which may enter the production premises are those which comply with this specification.'

It has been added that the moulding is 'manual' in order to ensure that tradition and the cheesemaker's skills are respected. Indeed, even if the other operations (cutting, stirring) were to be automated in the future, moulding will always have to be done manually. This particular type of moulding is the reason why it is impossible to define a very strict weight range for this cheese.

The size of the mould may be 'a little more or a little less than 2 centimetres to allow for a possible slight deformation of the mould'. As regards salting, the words 'over a period of several days' have been replaced by 'for at least two days' in order to make the text easier for operators and inspectors to understand.

Ripening cultures have been added to the list of authorised additives and processing aids.

Explanation: as ripening cultures do not always contain only starter cultures, the former wording must be supplemented.

5.8. Ripening

The pricking 'intended to aerate the cheeses' must be carried out between 'seven' (instead of 'eight') and fifteen days from the date of production. The authorisation to prick the cheeses starting on the seventh day (instead of the eighth) does not affect the specificity of the product. The maximum time before pricking (15 days) has been maintained, however, because if that were exceeded it might adversely affect the specificity of the product.

Amendment of point 6 'Elements justifying the link with the geographical environment':

The Section 'Link with the product's origin' has been divided into three parts: 'specificity of the geographical area', 'specificity of the product' and 'causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product'. The elements justifying the link with the product's origin have been expanded upon and clarified.

3.4. Amendment of point 7 'References to inspection bodies'

The details of the organisations involved in monitoring the production conditions are given, and in particular the details of the new certifying body chosen by the group.

3.5. Amendment of point 8 'Specific labelling details'

The requirement to use the national logo 'INAO' no longer applies. The particulars authorised on the labelling have been specified in more detail, as has the compulsory use of the EU 'PDO' symbol.

3.6. Amendment of point 9 'National requirements'

The 'main points to check' with their reference values and assessment methods have been added.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs⁽³⁾****'BLEU DE GEX HAUT-JURA'/'BLEU DE SEPTMONCEL'****EC No: FR-PDO-0217-0941-24.01.2012****PGI () PDO (X)****1. Name**

'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura'/'Bleu de Septmoncel'

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff**3.1. Type of product**

Class 1.3. Cheeses

3.2. Description of product to which the name in point 1 applies

'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura'/'Bleu de Septmoncel' is a cheese made solely with raw processed cow's milk.

Its uncooked, unpressed veined paste has a minimum fat content of 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after complete desiccation and it must have a dry matter content of at least 52 grams per 100 grams of cheese.

It is in the shape of a wheel with flat sides and clearly rounded corners between the sides and the heel, weighs between 6 and 9 kilograms and has a diameter of 31 to 35 centimetres at the time of marketing.

The rind is fine, dry, whitish to yellowish, slightly floury, and may have small reddish to brownish spots. The rind bears the imprint of the moulding cloth and possibly of the folds of the cloth.

The paste is soft, white to ivory in colour, with a slight opening and a marbling of fairly pale blue-green moulds. The blue areas, proteolysis areas (yellow) and any chalky areas (white and dry) are distributed evenly over the cheese slice. Pricking marks may be visible and may be associated with the development of blue or white moulds.

The cheeses have a minimum salt content (NaCl) of 0,8 grams per 100 grams of cheese.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only)

The cheese is produced solely from milk from cows of the Montbéliarde breed (breed type 46), or from cows of the French Simmental breed (breed type 35) or from crosses of these two breeds of certified descent.

3.4. Feed (for products of animal origin only)

In order to guarantee a close link between the area and the product through specific feed from the geographical area, the staple feed of the dairy cows must consist of fodder originating from pastures located in the geographical area and each dairy cow must receive not more than 1 800 kg of supplementary feed a year.

On the holding, the grazing area actually used must be at least equal to 1 hectare per dairy cow.

⁽³⁾ Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

In order to maintain the traditional practice of grazing, farm production systems where all the feed is supplied in troughs are forbidden. The dairy cows graze after the snow has melted and as soon as the soils' bearing capacity allows.

Fermented fodder, whether silage or not, is not to be used in the feed of the dairy herd owing to the technological risks related to these practices during the production and ripening of cheeses.

Only raw materials and supplementary feed derived from non-transgenic products are authorised for the dairy herd so as to preserve the traditional nature of the feed.

3.5. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the defined geographical area*

The milk must be produced and converted into cheese and the cheese ripened in the geographical area.

3.6. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.*

None.

3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling*

The word 'Gex' must be moulded into each cheese during production.

The labelling for the cheese must contain the name of the designation of origin 'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura'/'Bleu de Septmoncel' in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label.

Apart from the regulatory references applicable to all cheeses, the use of any term or other reference accompanying the designation is prohibited on the labelling, advertising, invoices or commercial documents, with the exception of specific trademarks.

The labelling must include the European Union 'PDO' symbol. It may also include the words 'protected designation of origin'.

4. **Concise definition of the geographical area**

The geographical area covers the following municipalities or parts thereof:

In the departement of Ain: the municipalities of Gex, Lélex, Mijoux, Chèzery-Forens, Confort, Lancrans, Léaz, Champfromier, Giron, Montanges, Plagne, Saint-Germain-de-Joux, Grand-Abergement, Petit-Abergement, Belleydoux, Échallon, Apremont, Charix, Lalleyriat, Le Poizat and those parts of the municipalities of Crozet, Échenevex, Vesancy, Divonne-les-Bains, Péron, Farges, Collonges, Saint-Jean-de-Gonville, Thoiry, Sergy, Billiat, Châtillon-en-Michaille, Injoux-Génissiat and Villes situated at an altitude of 800 metres or more and the part of the municipality of Bellegarde-sur-Valserine located to the northeast of the Rhône or Valserine.

In the departement of Jura: the municipalities of Bellecombe, Les Bouchoux, Choux, Coiserette, Coyriere, Larrivoire, Les Moussières, La Pesse, Rogna, Viry, Vulvoz, Lézat, Longchaumois, La Mouille, Prémanon, Tancua, Chassal, Lajoux, Lamoura, Lavancia-Epercy (apart from the part of this municipality that was formerly part of the municipality of Épercy), Molinges, Les Molunes, La Rixouse, Saint-Claude, Septmoncel, Vaux-lès-Saint-Claude, Villard-Saint-Sauveur, Villard-sur-Bienne, Château-des-Prés, La Chaumusse, Chaux-des-Prés, La Chaux-du-Dombief, Fort-du-Plasne, Grande-Rivière, Lac-des-Rouges-Truites, Les Piards, Prénovel, Saint-Laurent-en-Grandvaux, Saint-Maurice-Crillat (except for the part of this municipality corresponding to the former municipality of Crillat), Saint-Pierre.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

5.1.1. *Natural factors*

The geographical area corresponds to the original production area of this cheese: the Haut-Jura. Much of the area is between 800 and 1 200 metres in altitude.

Geologically, the Massif Haut-Jurassien is fairly homogenous and is composed mainly of limestones and marls of the Jurassic or Lower Cretaceous period. These formations are sometimes covered by glacial structures.

The climate is characterised by very abundant precipitation and very frequent low temperatures corresponding to the high altitude. The snow cover often lasts for several months. The abundant and regular precipitation almost always results in a water balance surplus. The low temperatures limit the length of biological cycles.

On this land, which is heavily wooded with coniferous trees, mainly spruce (some municipalities' forest cover exceeds 60 %), grassland is the main source of fodder. The strong predominance of natural grassland (permanent grassland accounts for 100 % of the Utilised Agricultural Area of most of the municipalities in the area) guarantees a strong link between the natural environmental factors and the specificities of the product.

The damp climate, which is favourable to grassland, and the terrain have helped to expand breeding activities and develop cheesemaking.

5.1.2. Human factors

Veined cheese has been produced for a long time in the Jura Mountains. Administrative documents show that at least since the end of the 18th century blue cheese with internal moulds has been made in mountain huts using milk from cows grazing in this damp area. The product was sold under the name 'Gex' or 'Septmoncel', or sometimes 'fromage bleu du Haut-Jura'.

This production is an essential element in the balance of the local economy, and when the designation or origin was recognised by the Court of Nantua in July 1935, it enabled the maintenance of traditional farming activities in the region.

5.2. Specificities of the product

'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura'/'Bleu de Septmoncel' is a cow's milk cheese with a veined, uncooked and unpressed paste.

The cheese is dotted with 'moulding holes' and other openings associated with heterofermentative fermentation caused in part by the native flora found in the milk.

The 'marbling' is the result of moulds, whose proteolytic activity softens the paste and gives the cheese its characteristic aromas. Without this proteolytic activity, the paste remains chalky, because it is difficult to handle in a vat and it is not pressed. Therefore an 'acid reserve' is maintained, as the whey is not eliminated completely.

The balance between a chalky appearance, proteolysed areas and areas where blue mould develops is a basic characteristic of the cheese. In addition, this balance determines the optimal size of the cheese: if it were smaller, all of the paste would be proteolysed rapidly, which would limit the commercial flexibility indispensable to a mountain cheese. On the other hand, a larger size would make it difficult to manage the balance between the chalky and proteolysed areas and the distribution of the blue mould in the paste.

5.3. Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI)

Owing to its geographical location, the mountainous region of Haut-Jura is naturally suited to agriculture: the grazing land is an important factor in cheese production.

The grass grown in the mountains is considered a genuine part of the local plant heritage. The low-intensity agricultural practices in the Haut-Jura have made it possible to keep a rich and diverse flora: there are as many as 70 different species in the hay meadows and pastures and this gives taste to the cheese. In order to use this resource sustainably, breeders let their animals graze as much as possible, making best use of the pasture and hay that alternate in some parcels. Regular clearance maintains the biodiversity of the resource and also helps maintain the landscape.

In this region, where meadows alternate with woods and combes, the extremely wide variety of perfumed flora gives the milk of cows of the Montbéliarde and French Simmental breed, which are particularly well adapted to the geographical area, a specific taste, preserved by using the milk raw. The predominance of grass and the efforts made to limit inputs in the feed of the animals have led to the production of milk that has a balanced fat and protein content but a limited richness.

As in all mountainous regions, it is appropriate to make cheeses that are as large as possible. The relative poorness of the milk and the rustic nature of the cheesemaking equipment used certainly formed the basis for producing blue cheese: owing to the altitude, the milk arrives at the place of production at a temperature that is often below 30 °C, which is a problem for the cohesion of the curds. This difficulty was overcome by stirring the curds in a vat and stopping just before a coating forms on the grains of curd, resulting in the grains coming delicately together in the mould. The manual moulding phase allows the cheesemaker to demonstrate his skills. Using a cloth in the mould improves the draining of the whey on the surface of the cheese and contributes to the appearance of the rind. As there is no pressing, additional straining is carried out by keeping the product in salt for several days. Pricking brings air into the cheese and enables the formation of blue mould.

The round shape and the weight/diameter ratio are a good compromise between surface area and volume and make it possible to preserve the cheese well, which is essential in mountainous areas.

The rounded corners of the cheese are created by the shape of the tubs where the product is salted. This is different from the classical moulding-removal method linked to the proteolysis of the paste.

The technique used to make 'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura'/'Bleu de Septmoncel' enables rapid ripening in relation to the volume of each cheese. Therefore, at the time of consumption the cheese has a balanced appearance and taste.

The cellars, which are naturally dry because of the chalky subsoils and the relatively short ripening period (considering the cheese's size), mean that 'Bleu de Gex Haut-Jura' or 'Bleu de Septmoncel' will not become covered with surface moulds, which are usually white or grey, and the imprint of the moulding cloth will remain visible until the end of the ripening process. The dry rind is also partly the result of the salting method used.

Ripening the cheese on a wooden board creates aerobic areas during the period when the cheese is in contact with the board. These areas promote the growth of bacteria, which cause reddish to brownish spots to appear on the rind. Turning the cheese regularly in the cellar and using spruce wood limit this phenomenon. Indeed, owing to its porosity, spruce wood is better than other wood species for regulating the cheese's surface moisture.

Reference to publication of the specification

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ⁽⁴⁾)

<https://www.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CDCBleudeGex.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ See footnote 3.